



Metropolitan Homelessness Commission
9:30 am, March 7, 2014
Sonny West Conference Center
Howard Office Building (Fulton Complex)
700 Second Avenue South

Present: Diane Kuhn, Steven Samra, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Renee Pratt, Charles Strobel, Burkley Allen, Marvin Cox, Glenn Cranfield, Mary Rolando, Wendell Segroves, Dayna Lovelady, Phil Duke, Damian Gilliam (for J.C. Smith), Jim Harbison, Howard Gentry, Tom Turner

Legal Representative: Josh Lee

Staff: Will Connelly, Judith Tackett, Tiffany Dale (Vista volunteer), Satrice Allen (MSS Finance rep)

Welcome & Roll Call

Commission Chair Diane Kuhn welcomed everyone, held roll call, and declared a quorum.

Minutes

No discussion was held. The minutes of January 10 were approved unanimously.

Financials

Satrice Allen reported that the current report shows that the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission is over budget. However, she said that expectations are that the Commission is on track by the end of the fiscal year.

There is a balance of \$14,000 in the Project Homeless Connect Fund. The Commission is working on an RFP to get another organization to host Project Homeless Connect moving forward. Will Connelly added that the Commission was really close to get that RFP out.

How's Nashville currently has \$81,000. Commissioners requested that the report reflects how much was raised since the last meeting and how much was spent.

Will Connelly reported that MDHA allocated up to \$200,000 in January for utility deposits, security deposits and first month rents from their CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds. Satrice Allen said at the current rate, the Homelessness

Commission is projecting to spend about \$50,000 by the end of the Fiscal Year. The CDBG grant runs from Jan. 1 to December.

Budget

Satrice Allen reported that Metro asked for a 3% reduction from all departments. The Commission decided to present a budget with a 3% reduction that would come out of the contracts and ask for the budget to be left at the same level. In past years, the Commission budget has not been cut. Renee Pratt reported that the MSS Board has already approved the Commission's budget proposal.

Contract Reports

Diane Kuhn asked each contractor to give a report.

Megan Bird with Centerstone explained the referral process and participants. To date Centerstone is serving 80 clients; 24 of them are in Phase I of the Critical Time Intervention model, 56 are in Phase II. At this point, Centerstone is close to capacity. Glenn Cranfield asked what the contract entails. Megan Bird gave an update on the Centerstone case management contract with the Homelessness Commission explaining that when someone goes through the How's Nashville campaign, Centerstone case managers provide in-home support. What that entails is to determine what the person wants to work on. This could include daily life skills, budgeting, etc. Centerstone follows the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) model, which is a nine-month case management model. Every phase has three months and varies in intensity level. The goal is to connect a person to community support services by the end of the nine months.

Charles Strobel asked whether there was a built-in relapse response.

Megan Bird said yes. The phases can be extended if people need a little bit more assistance. "We do not move them to the next phase unless they are ready."

Glenn Cranfield asked whether there were instances where people fell out of housing. Megan Bird said yes. In those instances, Centerstone case managers continue working with people to get them re-housed, deal with behavioral and mental health issues, etc. Further discussion among commissioners addressed relapsing or when people are too scared to move into housing. Steven Samra talked about peer support groups, which have proven effective in other cities.

Ashley Blum with Park Center gave a report about the SOAR Program. She said in January and February the time to get a person approved for disability and SSI benefits averaged 35 days. The overall average of approval time since the program was launched in 2006 is 42 days.

Diane Kuhn asked how it was possible to bring that approval period down so much.

Ashley Blum explained that it was done with a team approach and building relationships.

Charles Strobel said there was still a problem that when a person has gone through private assistance, they cannot switch over to Park Center.

Ashley Blum confirmed that if a person is working with an attorney, Park Center cannot work with them. However, if they are in the early application stage and want to withdraw from working with an attorney, they can do that and Park Center will be able to step in at that initial level. "We try not to make that a habit because SOAR is about starting at the initial phase." Ms. Blum further explains that people who work with attorneys generally

are told that they will have to be denied benefits at the first attempt. Ms. Blum says that is not the case. Attorneys, she explained, can file appeals on behalf of clients without having the clients tell them to do so. So a lot of clients don't even know they are in an appeals process. However, she said a client at that point should not step in and withdraw the appeals process because once they are approved, they receive back pay based on the initial filing date. If they withdraw, they will lose that back pay.

Ellen Zinkiewicz asked whether this would be worth having a conversation over with the Bar Association. Charles Strobel said he believes so. Diane Kuhn said this may be an issue that a committee may want to look into.

Will Connelly asked Ashley Blum whether she has a SOAR meeting/network she is working with. Ms. Blum said yes and that she can bring this issue up in the quarterly SOAR committee meeting.

Diane Kuhn asked Ashley Blum to come back to the next Commission meeting with an idea about how to address this issue.

Charles Strobel gave a brief report on Room In The Inn's Guest House and also the Day Center. He said that Room In The Inn's Point In Time count in January was 477 and in February 445. These are the people who come to Room In The Inn asking for emergency services. The Guest House has lowered the response time of police officers. It usually takes an officer 2 hours to go to jail. In comparison, if they can drop an intoxicated person off at Room In The Inn, the average officer spends 12-14 minutes. The Guest House offers a diversion of police time and when people are dropped off, they are not under arrest.

Update from the Director

- How's Nashville update:

The Commissioners were shown the 60 Minutes Overtime piece where Anderson Cooper and Andy Court were interviewed about their experience in Nashville. A discussion ensued about the 60 Minutes piece, the opportunity it offers, and in general what the pathway is to assist people in Nashville.

- Will Connelly reported that from June 2013 to January, 382 people who experienced chronic homelessness and/or were considered vulnerable and homeless went into housing. That's an average housing placement rate of 47 people per month. January was the lowest housing placement rate with 26 people that we know of so far moving into housing. The reason is that a lot of the focus of providers such as Open Table Nashville was on the cold weather and getting the people into emergency warming shelters. "We've been trying to keep the focus on permanent housing, but it was really imperative to get the people out of the cold."

Steven Samra asked for a comparison of housing placement prior to How's Nashville and after. Will Connelly said the average monthly housing placement rate was 19 people per month prior to the How's Nashville campaign. Those numbers count people who have experienced chronic homelessness and/or are considered vulnerable based on the VI or VI-SPDAT.

- Staffing: Will Connelly said that the Commission will bring on Deon Trotter at Housing/Outreach Coordinator.

- Coordinated Entry System (CES):

Will Connelly said the CES boils down to three issues:

1. Using a common assessment tool (VI-SPDAT);
2. Coordinating housing navigation activities, which includes gathering documents (ID, social security cards, birth certificates) and housing documents; and
3. Identify landlord/housing units to match people to.

He further explained that the How's Nashville campaign launched another 100 Day goal on February 10, which was to create a new Coordinated Entry System for Nashville and test the system by housing 50 individuals and 50 families (of highest acuity).

Will Connelly introduced Kristine LaLonde from the head of the Mayor's Office of Innovation and invited her to speak about a new Metro initiative called Continuous Improvement for Collective Impact (CiCi). Mr. Connelly said CiCi was really an initiative by the Mayor's Office to look at coordination. The effort brings together department heads to look internally at what the various Metro programs are doing, what the target populations are, and identify gaps and inefficiencies to create a more effective overall system.

Mr. Connelly said Kristine LaLonde, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor first called programs associated with poverty and homelessness together. The first meeting was in February, which was a launch. The second meeting was yesterday. That meeting was completely focused on programs involved in homelessness.

Five goals were determined to work towards. Those five goals are:

1. Establishing clear, measureable, communicated outcomes for all Metro programs and funded agencies.
2. Creating a standardized, coordinated intake system that supports a holistic and communicated approach to work with clients and providers.
3. Strengthening data systems that create inter-agency communication and support a coordinated response to client needs.
4. Formalizing partnerships between agencies with clear roles and responsibilities identified. These partnerships need to include defined outcomes and accountability measures.
5. Establishing a Unified Funding Agency status for the Continuum of Care Committee. This work should involve fuller coordination and integration of the Continuum of Care's and Metropolitan Homelessness Commission's work.

"These goals will help us at the Commission do what it was intended to do, which is coordinate with other departments. I hope these meetings will go towards workgroups."

Kristine LaLonde said the goal was for Metro to keep its own house in order. She said what it means for the Homelessness Commission was to look at its original intent, look at the broader issues, at workgroups, and see what action steps, plans, and ongoing reports are needed for ongoing change. "If we are in the same spot in five months as we were

yesterday when we report to the Mayor, we have a problem.” The Mayor’s Office of Innovation reports to the Mayor on a monthly basis.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was held for people who passed away.

Announcements:

Will Connelly was recognized by the Nashville Business Journal as a 40 Under 40 honoree. This honor goes to local leaders who have made significant impact in our city.

Public Hearing:

Jim Johnston addressed Diane Kuhn and asked whether Will Connelly and Anderson Cooper were friends. He stated that all the people that were interviewed were hand-picked. “All you’re doing is exploiting the homeless more. This Homeless Commission should be done with.” He further said, “All we’re doing with the money is supporting the rich homeless people. There is no housing out there. There is none. I’m looking.” He said the VA was spending a lot of money on itself. “But for us they’re not doing anything.” He said he was taking his life in his own hand and get nomination papers for Mayor. “If you will sign my petition and you will sign my issue.” He questioned why to continue funding these people and how many more millions the Commission was going to give its friends.

Steve Reiter said he wanted to thank Will Connelly and all he has done. He said the 60 Minutes piece was really good. He was also glad to see Kristine LaLonde with the Mayor’s Office attend the meeting. “It’s really pleasureable to me to have people come up to me and say, ‘Steve, I’ve got housing.’ Rather than, ‘I’ve got a trespass charge.’” He said it was the first time that people come up to him and are excited that they have housing. “One thing I want to bring to everybody’s attention is affordable housing,” Mr. Reiter said, adding that a lot of low-income units were lost in this city. “I believe we really have to focus a little on preservation of affordable housing.” He said he sees all over town housing stock that is perfectly good being torn down. He also pointed out that Erica Gilmore was at the meeting earlier and was working on some great stuff. He said it was important to get more people involved around the affordable housing issue.

Howard Allen said America had a wealth of resources and if we didn’t start using them, America was going to hell. Mr. Allen said he had a friend who died. He had a little money in the bank and worked. When he died, his body was at the coroner’s office for two months. “So I called to find out how to get the money to have him cremated. You can only get \$300. It takes \$900. It’s said that a system works for some and not for others.” He said that he thought Will Connelly is getting a great salary and that Open Table makes the Homeless Commission look real good because they’re putting people into housing. Mr. Allen also spoke about one of the people who had passed away. He spoke about veterans and that they are “talked to like hell.”

Barry Hobbes said Charles Strobel needed support to make Room In The Inn all year round. He also asked the Commission to focus and include jobs, food stamps, ID replacements as part of its effort. He lauded the 60 Minutes feature and said still more needs to be done. He called on the Commissioners to end homelessness in Nashville by 2020. Then he spoke on the topic of benches and asking Metro to put the benches back. "All these problems can be solved." He gave the Commission a time clock. "By 2020 we need to end this. We can do this. If you don't want to do it, get out of the room at least for a year and preferably don't come back at all."

Denis Huey asked who was paying for the Metro Police to sit at the Library Park all day long in a SWAT car. He said that was a waste of time. Diane Kuhn said the Commission could direct that question to Metro Police.

The next full Commission meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2014.
The next Executive Committee is scheduled for March 25.

Phil Duke made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Wendell Segroves. All approved. Meeting was adjourned.